

CLAIMS

1. A method of controlling usage of a portable digital device (14) having an audio and/or image data recording or capture function (12), the method including inhibiting operation of said data recording or capture function when said portable  
5 digital device is located in a specific geographic location or region (10).
2. A method according to Claim 1, wherein one or more fixed location security stations (20) and/or one or more other portable digital devices broadcast/transmit an inhibiting or disabling signal intermittently in the specific geographic location or region (10), and at least the audio and/or image function  
10 (12) of the portable digital device (14) being disabled on receipt of the signal.
3. A method according to Claim 1 or 2, wherein the portable digital device (14) is configured so that, once back outside the specific geographic location or region (10), the function (12) is restored.
4. A method according to Claim 2, where the one or more other portable  
15 devices (14) are used as repeaters to strengthen/broaden coverage of the signal broadcast/transmitted by the one or more fixed location security stations (20).
5. A method according to any one of the preceding Claims, further including steps of:
  - monitoring the geographic location of the portable digital device (14);
  - 20 comparing the monitored location with the specific geographical location or region (10), and
  - inhibiting operation of said function (12) when said portable digital device is in the specific geographic location or region.
6. A method according to Claim 5, wherein the geographic location of the

device (14) is monitored by means of a navigation module or functionality such as GPS + GSM, GPRS, CDMA, UTMS and 3G.

7. A method according to Claim 5 or 6, wherein the geographic location of the device (14) is monitored by means of triangulation of signals from two or more cellular base stations.

8. A method according to any one of the preceding Claims, further including steps of storing (808) data relating to a said device (14) detected as being present (or that has been present) in the specific geographical location or region (10).

9. A method according to any one of the preceding Claims, wherein the function (12) is inhibited for a predetermined period of time before the function can be enabled again.

10. A method according to any one of the preceding Claims, wherein the method includes steps of:

modifying (812) the memory/store of the device (14) to indicate that the inhibition operation has occurred, and

checking (704) whether the memory/store has been modified to indicate that the inhibition operation has occurred before allowing access the data recording or capture function (12).

11. A method according to any one of the preceding Claims, wherein the inhibition operation is communicated to the portable digital device (14) by means of a signal transmitted over one or more radio frequencies, e.g. the signal may be sent using frequencies supported by one or more of GSM, GPRS, 3G, I-Mode, UTMS, Ultrawideband (UWB) wireless data standard and/or CDMA.

12. A method according to Claim 11, wherein the one or more frequencies used to transmit the signal are changed at intervals to improve security.

13. A method according to any one of the preceding Claims, wherein the inhibition operation is communicated to the portable digital device (14) by means of a signal transmitted in the form of an audio signal/tone (typically one having a frequency outside normal human hearing range) and/or a signal transmitted at one or more optical frequencies (which can be fixed or modulated).

14. A method according to any one of the preceding Claims, further including a step of installing code on the device (14) for performing the control of usage of the device.

15. A method according to Claim 14, wherein the usage control code is installed by means of being included in a memory, processor or another component (e.g. a SIM card) within the device (14) or the usage control code is transmitted to the device by "Over the Air" techniques.

16. A method according to any one of the preceding Claims, further including a step of modifying or deleting code within the device (14) relating to the data recording or capture function (12) and/or preventing such code being executed/stored by the device.

17. A method according to any one of the preceding Claims, further including steps of:

detecting disconnection of the device (14) from a communications network, and

preventing and/or modifying a normal store operation and/or a normal transmission operation relating to captured data upon said disconnection.

18. A method according to any one of the preceding Claims, further including steps of:

detecting attempted operation of said data recording or capture function when said portable digital device is located in the specific geographic location or region, and

preventing a normal store operation and/or a normal transmission operation relating to the captured data.

19. A method according to Claim 17 or 18, further including a step of deleting the captured data from the device.

20. A method according to any one of Claims 17 to 19, further including a step of transmitting the captured data and/or details relating to the device (and/or a user of the device) to a security entity.

21. A method according to any one of the preceding Claims, further including a step of broadcasting a source-identifying signal to the specific geographical location or region.

22. A method according to Claim 21, wherein the source-identifying signal comprises an audio tone (typically one having a frequency that is normally inaudible to humans) and/or the source-identifying signal includes a series of optical signals.

23. A method according to Claim 21 or 22, further including steps of:

checking if data transmitted over a network includes a recording of the source-identifying signal, and

transmitting the data to a security entity instead of its intended recipient.

24. A method according to Claim 1, wherein a security station (20) is fitted on

board a vehicle, said security station broadcasting/transmitting an inhibiting or disabling signal intermittently in the specific geographic location or region (10) on board the vehicle, and at least the audio and/or image function (12) of the portable digital device (14) being disabled on receipt of the signal.

5        25.    A method of controlling usage of a portable digital device (14) having a data recording or capture function (12), the method comprising detecting operation of said data recording or capture function, and preventing and/or modifying a normal store operation and/or a normal transmission operation relating to the captured data.

10       26.    A method of controlling transmission of data over a communications network, the method comprising steps of:

             broadcasting source-identifying signal to a specific geographical location or region;

             detecting attempted transmission of data including the source-identifying  
15       signal over the network, and

             preventing and/or modifying the attempted transmission of data including the source-identifying signal.

27.    A method of storing data relating to devices detected as being present (or that have been present) in a specific geographical location/region (10) and  
20       transmitting marketing data to the devices.

28.    A method of disabling a data capture function (12) of a portable digital device (14) connectable to a communications network, the method including steps of:

             detecting disconnection of the device from the network, and

preventing and/or modifying a normal store operation and/or a normal transmission operation relating to captured data upon said disconnection.

29. A portable digital device (14) including audio recording and/or imaging devices (12) and means (16) for inhibiting operation of said audio recording and/or imaging devices when said portable digital device is located in a predetermined geographic location or region (10) and/or in response to an externally generated inhibiting signal.

30. A communication system including a security monitoring station (20) and one or more portable digital devices (14) according to Claim 2.

31. A security monitoring base station (20) operable to detect presence of a portable digital device (14) including audio recording and/or imaging devices (12) in a prohibited zone (10) and to transmit to said portable digital device a signal inhibiting operation of said devices.

32. A method of controlling usage of a portable digital device (14) including a data recording or capture function (12) that is normally disabled, the method comprising enabling operation of said data recording or capture function when said portable digital device is located within (or outside) a predetermined geographic location or region (10).

33. A method for capturing security information relating to a portable digital device (14) which includes an imaging device (12), said method comprising enabling operation of said imaging device in response to an interrogation or enabling signal from a central station.